



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Department of Social Services

PRESS RELEASE

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A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words at the Catawba County Heart Gallery

In keeping with the phrase, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” the first Heart Gallery of Catawba Valley Exhibit and Gala will premier on February 16, 2007 at 7:30pm at the Newton-Conover Civic and Performance Place, 60 West 6th Street, Newton. Catawba county resident Grace Wepner, Miss Gastonia 2007, has partnered with Family Builders of Catawba County and the Catawba County Department of Social Services to collaborate on this innovative gallery-style exhibit that highlights children in the Catawba County foster care system currently awaiting adoption.

The Heart Gallery Exhibit features children waiting for adoption that have agreed to be photographed by National Award winning photographer, David Crosby of Hickory. Crosby has generously donated his time and talent to capture each child's emotions and personality through his camera to give them the opportunity to capture the heart of a caring and loving adult. The exhibit itself will represent all of area children currently waiting for a family, a home and a future.

Originated in 2001 in New Mexico to help waiting children connect with adoptive families, the Heart Gallery has since been organized throughout 42 states. An overwhelming response has been featured on the Today Show, MSNB, Parade, People Magazine and The View with Rosie O'Donnell to name a few. The Catawba Valley Heart Gallery Exhibit Opening and Gala will offer a main stage musical showcase featuring Grace Wepner on the harp, vocalists Eli Glynn, Chris Barton, and Kristin Williams, bluegrass band Beaconwood, and other special entertainment. The showcase will be followed by a silent auction and hors d'oeuvres in the gallery. Admission is free, and donations will be accepted. Proceeds will be used for enrichment activities to promote and enhance the lives of foster youth in the Catawba Valley. The photography exhibit will continue to rotate during the year throughout the county to different venues, raising awareness of the critical need for more foster and adoptive parents.

Family Builders of Catawba Valley affirms the philosophy that every child has the right to a safe, loving, and permanent home. Established in 1995 by Catawba County Social Services and Children's Home Society of North

Carolina, Family Builder's mission is to create, build, strengthen and sustain families through foster care and adoption. The Heart Gallery of Catawba Valley plays a vital role in fulfilling this mission, as it is the first large-scale community event to raise awareness of Catawba County children available for adoption.

As the 2007 spokesperson for the Heart Gallery Catawba County resident, Grace Wepner's involvement to assist children in state custody in their dream of a loving family is nothing new. The daughter of Tim and Ann Wepner and granddaughter of Claude Abernethy Jr, Grace, for the past 5 years has been actively pursuing her mission of "A Home for Every Child" through her continued involvement in her Miss America Program Community Service efforts. Grace has a true passion for the children needing to be part of a loving permanent family. As one of twelve children, five of whom are adopted from Guatemala, she is more than familiar with the gifts that adoption has to offer, not only for the child but also for the entire family.

Anyone interested in getting more information or sponsorship opportunities for The Heart Gallery of Catawba County should contact Anne Wepner at 828-320-5307.

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